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Sonoma Coast Beaches At Risk for Requiring Fees & Getting Microbeads Out of the Ocean
Jennifer Stock, Cea Higgins, Lisa Boyle

Jennifer: You're listening to Ocean Currents, a podcast brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. This show was originally broadcast on KWMR in Point Reyes Station, California. Thanks for listening.

(Music)

Jennifer: Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to another edition of Ocean Currents. I'm your host Jennifer Stock. On this show, I talk with scientists, educators, explorers, policy makers, ocean enthusiasts, adventurers and more. All uncovering and learning about the mysterious and vital part of our planet, the blue ocean. I bring this show to you monthly on KWMR from NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, one of four national marine sanctuaries in California all working to protect unique and biologically diverse ecosystems. Cordell Bank is located just offshore of the KWMR listening radius off the Marin/Sonoma Coast, and is a thriving ecosystem with ocean life above and below the surface. And from what I hear locally, lately, there are many, many, many whales off shore right now and is a great time to go whale watching in The Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank Sanctuaries. There's lots of whales around, so if you want to go see whales now's the time to go. So, I've got two topics lined up for you today. We'll be talking about the proposed Iron Ranger Stations for Sonoma Coast beaches with Cea Higgins of the Sonoma County Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation. And on the second half of this show we'll be discussing microbeads and research and the efforts the nonprofit group 5 Gyres is leading with guest Lisa Boyle policy direct with 5 Gyres. So, lots to talk about. Stick with us.

(Music)

Jennifer: Thanks for tuning in. On the line with me I have Cea Higgins and Cea you're live on the air, you with us?

Cea: Yes I am. Good afternoon.

Jennifer: Thanks for joining me. So, Cea is an environmental policy and volunteer coordinator with the Sonoma Coast Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and Cea has been working with locals and the Surfrider Agency on an issue that has been in the news for a couple years now about proposing to put in fee collection stations on the Sonoma Coast. So, Cea can you give us just a little bit of background about when this proposal was put out and the extent for which it is proposed for?

Cea: Yeah, of course. The initial proposal began several years ago and let me discuss the proposal, it is to put fifteen fee collection stations along the Sonoma Coast in parking areas that have historically been free parking areas along Highway 1. State Parks manages these areas on our coastline. The Sonoma Coast is about 70 - 75 miles and State Parks manages over half of that coastline and so these are pay stations that are to be put in to collect fees in order to park and access the beaches on the Sonoma Coast that are currently free. Initially, State Parks

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began by just filing a categorical exemption which was to just place the fee station collection boxes in these parking areas and Sonoma Coast Surfrider felt that this wasn't just about, you know, a construction of these boxes this is about a change in use in public access to our coast so we fought and asked that there be a review process in order to see how these fee collection devices would impact public access and also impact the environment on the Sonoma Coast. So, about three years ago when they applied for this categorical exemption we thought that there would be a county review process. The CDP (Coastal Development Permit) so that the public could get involved and there would be an elaborate review process to see, how these impacts, what these impacts would be and so that process began with the county in the Permit Resources Management Department and through that process the county rejected the proposal from State Parks because they felt that as it was currently written it would have too large of an impact on public access there have many factors that had not be accounted for in the proposal by State Parks. So, once that permit was denied by the county, the county of Sonoma, the county kind of left open for State Parks an opportunity to modify the proposal, to adjust it, to look at different ways to collect fees on the Sonoma Coast or to raise revenue for State Parks cause you know we are all under the same understanding that we need to be able to support our State Parks here on the Sonoma Coast. But instead State Parks chose to appeal denial to the California Coastal Commission and so that is where we are right now is looking at this proposal with the California Coastal Commission having jurisdiction rather than the county.

Jennifer: Interesting, and I guess, I don't know enough about the overall jurisdiction of the California Coastal Commission versus county oversight in these matters. But, . . .

Cea: Right. That's a really good question because with the Coastal Act which was, you know, from the early 70s in California the public fought to have public access to the coastline and from that we have our California Coastal Commission that now requires any development on the coast you have to get a Coastal Development Permit so that you can review any kind of impact to the environment or to Public Access but the Coastal Commission has yielded jurisdiction to decide these matters to local jurisdictions who have what they call a Certified Local Coastal Plan which is what we do have here in Sonoma County we have one of the original certified LCPs so when State Parks was looking for this rather than applying with the Coastal Commission directly which does occur in other areas in California that don't have a certified LCP they had to instead apply with the county to have the review process done here locally and so that's why we had that process here in Sonoma County and that's why it was denied first here. But naturally the Coastal Commission has, you know, seniority jurisdiction and so if a particular applicant is dissatisfied with the local process they can then ask for an appeal with the Coastal Commission.

Jennifer: So, this is a little confusing.

Cea: Yes, it is.

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- Jennifer:* If a county has a coastal plan that's updated, a proposal can go to the county first and then . . .
- Cea:* Exactly, and normally that's where it ends because of the fact that the Coastal Commission has yielded jurisdiction to the county.
- Jennifer:* Got it.
- Cea:* This is a very rare circumstance in front of the commission in which the commission actually took jurisdiction away from the county with a certified LCP and that was done at a hearing in April in Marin County in which the appeal was basically granted and that the Coastal Commission would take jurisdiction away from the county on deciding this issue for the Sonoma Coast.
- Jennifer:* So, where does it reside at this point, today?
- Cea:* Right now, it is residing and it's going through the review process with the Coastal Commission. So, it is very timely that you are bringing this issue to the public because everyone now has an opportunity to speak their concerns to the Coastal Commission directly. At the hearing in April, it was a very close vote because, you know, the Coastal Commission naturally wants to honor a county's interpretation of its LCP that has been certified by the commission and basically as far as the reasons for denial the Coastal Commission completely agreed that the county made the correct decision in denying the application but what they looked at was that the fee issue for State Parks and funding State Parks has a state wide implication and so that's why they took over jurisdiction not necessarily because they disagreed with the county's decisions but they felt like this was something that had to be looked at on a statewide level.
- Jennifer:* Because this could set a precedent for other counties throughout the state of California?
- Cea:* Exactly and that's why it's so important that it's done correctly here and that's how Surfrider and other environmental and coastal groups have become very active in the process and why the public needs to be very involved in the process because the precedent that's set here will extend to the entire California Coastline.
- Jennifer:* That's so interesting and knowing that the California Coastal Commission was actually developed around wanting access to the coastline. This is kind of an interesting position that they're in where they may fall.
- Cea:* Yeah. There's been a lot pressure on the commission from our current administration. There's been kind of a shift in how we view our public lands and our State Parks to somehow be could be a whole show in itself that parks are suppose to be revenue generating and self sufficient and so that's sort of been the trend. There was a lot of pressure for the Coastal Commission to get involved in this particular proposal and unfortunately Sonoma County somehow became the crucible of this issue so we're taking a lot of responsibility on how fees

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happen, where they should happen, when they should happen, how much they should be, etc.

Jennifer:

For folks just tuning in, I'm talking with Cea Higgins who's with the Sonoma Coast Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and we're talking about the proposal to install Iron Ranger stations, fee collection stations at currently free beaches along the Sonoma Coast. And honestly as a Sonoma County resident I view these beaches as just a real gift and treasure as a resident to go enjoy and appreciate the ocean and the coast with my family. It's interesting to think about having to pay for it and yet I'm thinking also about, well, when you are paying for something you are supporting something as well so what are some of the maybe unintended consequences that could come with fees that we're not thinking about here?

Cea:

Well, I think it's also really important when you talk about enjoying the Sonoma Coast I think that there is this misconception that we don't currently pay here that the entire coastline is free. Where we have amenities, where State Parks have amenities, for example, the Dunes, Bodega Dunes Campground or Fort Ross, they do charge fees and people pay fees happily to support the parks because there are amenities there. There's paved parking, there's flushing toilets, trash collection, trails to the beach. The difficulty with this particular proposal is that these locations, many of them, are just sort of roadside pull out parking areas.

Jennifer:

Hmmm

Cea:

Not paved, not ADA compliant, at most, maybe a pit toilet and they are all parking areas along the narrow stretch of Highway 1. So, we're looking at charging fees in a location where nowhere else in California are they currently charging fees. So, that's why it is really important that we looked at what are the factors that you are paying for, what are you supporting and also where are the fees going to be utilized. Is this something that is going to come back to the Sonoma Coast and help improve these facilities or is this all going to be going into the General Fund and supporting parks throughout the state? So, we're kind of looking at all these different factors on where, how, when you charge fees. Because everyone feels like you do, you know, this is a precious resource, this is a location where, you know, you have a lot of people inland communities that come out to the coast it's already extremely expensive. Our Sonoma Coast is unique in that you can only access it by vehicle there is no mass transit available, no efficient mass transit, you can't walk to the beach you have to drive here the only way you get here is with your vehicle you are already paying basically to come the coast and so once you're here you know that becomes something that affects a lot of people who could not afford to pay these fees in order to enjoy some of the coastline. And so, you know, how the socio-economic as well as the environmental and the public access impacts are all something we are trying to take into consideration as we look at how unique fees would be on the Sonoma Coast.

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- Jennifer:* Is there a position by Surfrider to collect some fees maybe at the high use areas where there's flush toilets or I'm not sure I don't think there are any flush toilets maybe they are all pit toilets . . .
- Cea:* None of the proposed locations is there any ADA compliance or any of those amenities where they do currently charge. Not a single one of those locations. Let me point out that the fifteen locations cover the entire coastline and if anybody is familiar with some of these locations, you know, they include Salmon Creek Beach (north and south), Portuguese Beach, Schoolhouse Beach, Campbell Cove, Bodega Head, and every single parking area at Goat Rock Beach as well, and then a location in Salt Point and Russian Gulch. So that's pretty much every single access point that exists. One of the factors that I think is really important to consider is that we don't have very much safe beach access on the Sonoma Coast or very many safe beaches, you know, where there is sandy beaches and a trail and maybe a wading opportunity and so the problem with this proposal is that every safe location is slated for a pay station and our concern is that people are naturally are going to try to gravitate towards areas where they are going to continue to park for free and the areas that have been left unmarked for a pay station are our much more dangerous beaches.
- Jennifer:* Absolutely, I have seen some of those turnouts. . .
- Cea:* We've had a lot of rescues because of the dangerous conditions at those sites. So, we're very concerned about if they're going to lock up the safe beach access that we are going to have an increase rescues and that we have to look at the costs of that would be as well not just the cost to human lives or human safety but also to the local jurisdictions who would take on the costs conducting those rescues.
- Jennifer:* That I definitely see as an unintended consequence that could rather horrible in the end.
- Cea:* And the other unintended consequence is naturally, you know, people State Parks is trying to propose that they should include in the alternative parking the roadside parking, you know, along Highway 1. And Surfrider does a lot of beach clean ups, we have a lot presence on the beach and when you a holiday or a lot of people coming to the beach beautiful weather and people park all along the roadside it's a very dangerous situation because you have people walking along a narrow stretch of Highway 1, with cars zooming by at 50 miles per hour and then you have on the other side of that you know a coastal bluff that drops fifty feet so what we are afraid of if they have a parking area that has a single egress in and out and that is a fee area, next to it you are going to have all this competition remaining three spots and we are very concerned about, you know, the increase in public safety risks, not only that people then naturally begin to start forging trails so volunteering trails using the main trail from the fee lot they just start climbing down the bluffs and whatever area, they find a free place to park so we are looking at sort of the environmental damage would occur too if

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people forging trails and making access to beach wherever there they find a free place to park.

Jennifer: The existing lifeguards that are on the part of the coast Are these county lifeguards or State Park lifeguards

Cea: They are State Park lifeguards and often you have one or two covering a forty mile area of coast so they have a lot of work.

Jennifer: I'm curious State Park employees being the ones on the scene for the rescues that need to happen

Cea: Well, I think that is a really good point. There seems to be and hopefully State Park is working on, kind of a disconnect is between how the local jurisdiction feels about this issue and the concerns that they have being very familiar with what's happening on the coast with what the policy being set in Sacramento as far as we need to start making our parks revenue generating parks. So, there is a bit of a disconnect part of the public process we fought for so hard with Surfrider is that these concerns that Sacramento and the commissioners who are going to be making these decisions become aware of what these impacts truly are. This isn't so much fee, no fee, it is about let's really look at the situation let's really look at each location and determine what all of the factors are that we need to consider before deciding is this a good idea or not. And is it really going to raise the revenue that you think it is going to raise. I mean part of the comparison is that there has to be a baseline you have to determine how much these areas currently being used and then also what are the current environmental impacts without the fees so that if they were to implement them we could see if there is a comparison because if it turns out that severe impact the Coastal Commission does have the authority and jurisdiction to then, you know, pull back the permit and say that you can no longer charge the fees. I mean that hasn't historically happened but I mean it's a possibility. So, it's really important that we establish baselines and determine what factors most affect this decision.

Jennifer: Really interesting point that you say about the baseline and I'm wondering if we have any information. I'm curious if the lifeguards take somewhat of a car count on their passes. I'm sure that's not high on your priority list when they're on duty looking for needed assistance that they need to provide but it seems like there must be some way to assess historic use of these areas and do you know of any data sources were that would exist?

Cea: Well, we are finding that there is going to be a very careful calculation of baseline. I mean that's one of the things that we are requiring or asking the Coastal Commission to make as part of one of the parameters of these permits. In other areas of California where the State Parks has applied directly to the commission the difference is that there were fees that already existed so they were able to use the current parking structure, you know, the actual machine to actually make a baseline to count and then to see how adjustments to the fees, either increasing them or providing hourly rate how that affected access. The problem here on the Sonoma Coast is that we don't have any kind of baseline.

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So, we are asking for very detailed plan by State Parks. And they are in the process of trying to present that plan to the commission so are they going to go out there with clipboards and count cars, are they going to put strip across that look at you know people coming in and out. I mean these are all things that are to be designed by State Parks and are actually asking that it be a very elaborate and well-thought-out baseline plan.

Jennifer: Definitely, where in terms of timing at this point what is is there a hearing coming up soon?

Cea: Well, there's a few things that we're advocating for, that The Surfriders' advocating for. State Parks naturally wanting to earn revenue, they're trying to push this through as fast as possible. We're trying to slow it down. They originally at the hearing they want they wanted to in April they wanted to have this back again in front of the Commission in just a few months or by the end of the year. What we're asking for and we're working with the county who still wants to be involved in this process that we actually conduct the hearing here in Sonoma County. That Sonoma County hosts the California Coastal Commission hearing so that people most affected will have an opportunity to attend the hearing. So, we are working on the timeline. It's unknown at this time when that's going to happen but what people really need to realize is what affects the decision the most isn't so much the hearing but the staff report that's written as a recommendation to the Commissioners when they vote on the hearing. So, the time is now for people to write letters to the commission, to email the commission and let them know what factors they think should be considered in this determination how they feel about this proposal so that the commission staff will take that into account as they write their recommendation. The other thing that we are really focusing on doing is to have Community Forum because you know the hearings are often during the day and it's very difficult you know people that are most affected they're working they can't attend the hearing. So, we're trying to conduct some community forums here in Sonoma County, here on the coast and also as well in Santa Rosa, possibly a location up North all the different State Parks it comes to these different Community Forums, presents their proposal and has an opportunity to hear from people all the different environmental groups that feel affected have an opportunity to speak and hopefully come up with some kind of solution that everybody feels good about. How do we support our parks but also maintain public access to our coast.

Jennifer: The forums are being hosted by the Surfrider Foundation to provide an opportunity for dialogue is that what you're saying? Or people to really understand the breadth of the issue and some possible solutions to what's being presented.

Cea: Yes, and to feel like they have voice, exactly. We are working on setting up some dates hopefully in the future hopefully in the Fall so we can have these forums and people can attend but I really encourage people in the meantime to contact, and I have the contact information to contact The Coastal Commission and state their opinion I mean their concern right now because it is important that they hear this now.

Jennifer: Why don't you give that information because we just a couple minutes left.

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- Cea:* I'm going to give two informational sources. We have a website dedicated to this issue and if people want to go on and research everything that has happened and all the different factors they can go onto www.freeourbeaches.org and it is a really good informational website. It has the Coastal Commission report, it has the county denial and the reasons why, it has the State Parks proposal of how and where they want to have these fees. I highly encourage people to go to that site [freeourbeaches.org](http://www.freeourbeaches.org). And then also to write to the Coastal Commission and they can write directly to Ethan Lavine and that's ethan.lavine@coastal.ca.gov
- Jennifer:* Great. That's ethan.lavine@coastal.ca.gov
- Cea:* Exactly
- Jennifer:* Wonderful. Well, Cea, just two minutes left here. Are there any last pieces that you want to share with listeners about this proposal and what . . .
- Cea:* We're naturally because we are a grassroots organization, we're very concerned about what the public feels about this and we want to make sure that we are advocating for the right thing always and so we have Facebook page - Sonoma Coast Surfrider - and you can contact us through our Facebook page. Unfortunately our website is under construction but if they just to go ahead and talk to us about it. There's a lot of information on our Facebook page about this proposal and we just sort of invite people is there something that we haven't thought of or what are your feelings become involved in the process. This is there coast and this is there access to the coast so we want to be representing the community most affected. So, please contact us, we want to hear from you.
- Jennifer:* Thank you, and are you involving other Surfrider Chapters on this up and down the coast since ultimately now with the Coastal Commission.
- Cea:* Naturally we're concerned because as we talked about the presidential value of this, so yes we've worked with Marin Surfrider quite a bit and also Humboldt and Mendocino Surfrider, who are concerned about this issue, and naturally headquarters has been supporting us because the Surfrider Foundation is primarily or one of our big concerns is preserving public access to the coast. Yeah, we are statewide looking at this, but Sonoma County particularly focusing on this as it's a Sonoma County proposal.
- Jennifer:* Great. Well, thank you so much Cea for providing such an overview and breadth of the history of this proposal and providing some resources for folks to get more information and to voice their opinion to the appropriate people. Just in review, www.freeourbeaches.org, is a great source and emailing Ethan Lavine at the Coastal Commission is where you can directly voice an opinion about this issue. And I look forward to hearing about next steps with local forums and hearings and thank you for your work with Surfrider to keep us ahead of this issue.
- Cea:* Yeah, and we will definitely be publishing the dates of those community forums and anything that we do here we'll be getting out to the public. So stay in contact with us.
- Jennifer:* Great. Well, thank you so much Cea and appreciate you coming on the show today.

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Cea: Yeah, and thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about this. Thank you Jennifer.

Jennifer: Alright, have a great afternoon.

Cea: You too. Bye.

Jennifer: This is KWMR 90.5 Point Reyes Station, 89.9 Bolinas, and 92.3 in the San Geronimo Valley and you are listening to Ocean Currents. I'm Jennifer Stock and on the first half I was talking with Cea Higgins of the Sonoma Coast Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, talking about the proposed fee collection stations that are being considered on the Sonoma Coast and currently a hearing scheduled at some point and it's a good time to communicate with the Coastal Commission to learn more about the pros and cons of this issue at freebeaches.org. We're going to take quick music break and come back and dive into the massive topic of the most tiniest little thing, that's causing great harm, microbeads. We'll be back in just a little bit.

(Music)

Jennifer: And welcome back you are tuned into Ocean Currents here on KWMR, my name is Jennifer Stock and on the telephone with me I have Lisa Boyle with Five Gyres. Lisa, you are live on the air.

Lisa: Hello Jennifer.

Jennifer: Hi, thank you so much for calling in. Last month we scheduled you and I believe you were quite occupied with a gyre cruise getting ready for an expedition.

Lisa: Yeah.

Jennifer: And I want to hear all about that, for sure.

Lisa: That was an incredible experience. It was my first research expedition with Five Gyres. I'm their policy director and I am a lawyer so getting to be in the first hand science part of the equation was new to me and really reinvigorated my work.

Jennifer: That's wonderful. First can you give us a little background on what 5 Gyres is, is the Five Gyres Institute.

Lisa: Right.

Jennifer: I feel kind of fortunate to have been with NOAA for about 15 years now and I got a chance to sail with Charlie Moore on the Algita to Guadalupe Island and it was all before Five Gyres started. And I feel like I have been watching this infancy of this organization form.

Lisa: Right.

Jennifer: Take off and so can you just give us some background about it and what you've been up to.

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Lisa:

Absolutely. Well Five Gyres is a really unique organization because we are dealing with plastic pollution from science through education to policy solutions. And we're unique because we're covering all the oceanic gyres, all the ocean plastic pollution on the globe. We've researched the ocean plastics in all the oceans in the world and we are creating solutions, real world solutions for that plastic pollution. The research that Five Gyres has done is very very innovative in terms of doing a calculation about how much plastic pollution there is on the surface of the Earth's waters and that got a lot of attention. We calculated that there is five trillion plastic pieces or more than two hundred and fifty thousand tons of plastic on the surfaces of the oceans and that 95% of that plastic pollution is smaller than a grain of rice. So, and that's just the surface, and plastic pollution goes down through the water column, to the benthos, settles on the bottom of the oceans. So we're dealing with a huge problem. And Five Gyres did some recently compelling research showing a particular product's impacts on the waters because when you're out in the middle of the ocean like I was with Five Gyres on my expedition with Alkaleda, you're straining the ocean and collecting tiny tiny bits of microplastics, that have down from larger pieces and it's really hard to identify what country they come from or, you know, what they originally were. But 5 Gyres did the same kind of research in the Great Lakes. And trolling the Great Lake we found microbeads, these perfectly spherical round bits of plastic, and unlike the fragments in the middle of the ocean these microbeads in the Great Lakes, we were able to trace to a particular product. And obviously to a particular set of countries because the Great Lakes are shared by Canada and the United States and these perfectly round spheres we were able to show come from consumer personal care products. They use the exact same beads that are in face washes, body scrubs, toothpaste that we use as exfoliants. So it was pretty shocking to find a direct connection and with that research, that Five Gyres published along with Suni, New York we showed the world how one personal care product can and you know it is really shocking that more than 3,000 products containing polyethylene or polypropylene B, the little plastic beads. And each tube can contain more than 3,000,000 tiny microbeads and plastics and we estimate that the amount tonnage from these tiny tiny plastic beads is about 38 tons annual. Which is a lot considering how small they are. When we were trolling the Great Lakes there were 450,000 microbeads per square kilometer in Lake Erie. So that kind of shocking information, when it was published, led Five Gyres to want to come up with a solution. We thought that the only appropriate solution in this case was a ban on these beads because they're not needed, they're a natural alternative and this is a product with such poor design, such poor forethought that you would put plastic so small into a product designed to be washed off and for this product to go down the drain and immediately into our waterways. It can't be filtered by sewage treatment because it is so small. So we wrote a ban, a model ban, that we published to an environmental law journal on general plastic pollution and from there it just traveled like wildfire. We dealt first with California and New York in proposing legislation and then it traveled across to many different states and the strongest, the best, bill passed last week in Connecticut. Which is just a fantastic bill and we're so excited about that and we're also working at the federal level. And we are still and we are halfway through in California passed through the assembly. With Assembly Bill 888 which is authored by the wonderful Richard Bloom. And that just now we have to pass the Senate and get the Governor's signature and that'll be a very strong bill as well.

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Jennifer: The bill 888 is, state again.

Lisa: That's California.

Jennifer: Oh, that's California, okay.

Lisa: So the one in Connecticut that passed last week is the strongest of the seven bills that have passed in individual states. So we are really excited about Connecticut. It's just wonderful. And we'd like that Connecticut or the California ban to be the model for federal legislation.

Jennifer: What makes it so strong compared to the others?

Lisa: Good question Jennifer. What makes it so strong is that it does not have an exemption for bioplastics.

Jennifer: Oh, good.

Lisa: Yes, and that is a real problem because the plastics industry is really pushing to have bioplastics be the replacement for plastic microbeads in their products. And this really just substitutes one bad thing for the other. And we've really learned that that you need to be so careful with legislation. For instance we banned BPA and then BPS came out. You need to write legislation that doesn't allow the substitution of one bad thing for another. And the problem with the bioplastics is we haven't seen yet something that really biodegrades in the marine environments, so that we can trust that this is a safe alternative.

Jennifer: Interesting point there in terms of, it's been bioplastics are a big interesting topic overall with recycling and choices.

Lisa: Right.

Jennifer: And just making the best choice which is avoiding it all together. There's so many substitutes. So, that's interesting. Tell me about the timing of this bill authored by Richard Bloom.

Lisa: Well, the legislative session in California and in early September and we're making bad pace in California truthfully the public reaction to getting all this information about plastic microbeads has been so tremendous that the manufacturers in general really want this resolved because they're taking a big hit at the marketplace so I think we will get legislation in California definitely this legislative session. So we're just really trying to hold our ground not to allow dangerous exemptions. And an interesting thing that happened in Connecticut is that instead of allowing any exemptions what Connecticut did was basically to enact the precautionary principle which is a wonderful European principle that we definitely need more of here in America. It's really too bad that our toxics legislation doesn't have the precautionary principle, which is basically that you can't put something on the market until it's proven to be safe. And so what Connecticut did it said that microbeads are banned, what we know to be microbeads polypropylene

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are banned if you come up with something manufacturers that you can show is safe, non-toxic truly by the grace of the marine environment doesn't have a negative consequence then you show that product and they chose an agency the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering to be their watchdog and, and if they can prove to that agency that they've come up with a viable alternative besides the many that already exist like apricot shells, you know, rice husks, if you go to any natural food store or Whole Foods has banned microbeads so every single exfoliant in the Whole Foods is a natural exfoliant. There are so many alternatives but what Connecticut did is in order to not impede innovation, they said, well if you come up industry with something, some sort of alternative besides the natural ones we will give you a shot to prove it. And they chose an agency and they're using the precautionary principle which I think is a good compromise.

Jennifer: Well, and we know anything petroleum based is not a good compromise.

Lisa: Absolutely, and there you get to the basic basic root of this problem with plastic pollution in general and why the the battle that we're facing is so hard why such a David-and-Goliath because the plastics industry is really the same as Petroleum in the natural gas industry. The lobbyists are the same because it's all fossil fuel-based and there is such a push to drill more, to these incredibly destructive processes for extracting fossil fuels now we're getting oil and natural gas from tar sand, from fracking we have actually had a lot of natural gas here in America because of these really intrusive methods of getting fossil fuels that the price of plastic, virgin plastic is so low that nobody even wants to recycle because who would want to pay to go through that process when the virgin stuff is so cheap. So, you know our job and trying to pass legislation for safer safer alternatives to single-use plastic is really made harder by this, this incredible rush to extract fossil fuels and you can see one example California on July 1st we were supposed to have a plastic bag ban but we don't have it because the plastic bag industry which is plastic and general which is fossil fossil fuels took our loss by the governor of the state of California to ban plastic bags and paid to get it on the November ballot as an initiative to recall our law. So, it was supposed to be in effect on July 1st but now we have to wait till November and re-vote on a law that was signed by the Governor and that's all the pressure of cheap cheap cheap fossil fuels and plastic.

Jennifer: The roots go pretty deep on this issue. I wanted to go back to one of your you're talking about the industry the manufacturers really want to have this resolved and from what I understand I think it was Johnson & Johnson agreed to ban the bead as a manufacturer without any law by a certain date but then recently were they proposing a bioplastic alternative, what was that all about?

Lisa: Well this is an example kind of greenwashing, Johnson & Johnson who is one of the big manufacturers that said okay because they were publicly humiliated we're going to get rid of microbeads by this date but then when in California we stuck to our guns and said we're going to have this law without the loopholes that have occurred in other states like Illinois that you drive a truck through this loophole with just about anything and so we said no we're not going to have any loopholes in California and then J&J came out against to California Assembly Bill 888. They criticised us in the New York Times saying that we were opposed to innovation, which is not true. But, basically what they're trying

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to do is to substitute their old plastic with new plastic and we just will not allow that to happen and so I'm really given a tremendous amount of hope by the Connecticut ban that that's really good and we're going to stick to our guns in California and you know even even when one state does something really progressive like Connecticut has it has an industry-wide impact because these products are sold in every state. So, if one state can say we're not going to allow your plastic crud in products in our state then it really forces industry to reformulate.

Jennifer: So, I want to talk a little bit about personal choices and you're mentioning about how many products carry this and you know I've been following this for a long time and we didn't have a lot of microbeads in our bathroom closet until I realized our toothpaste had it, the toothpaste that my dentist gave us, which I immediately discarded.

Lisa: It's horrible.

Jennifer: I just felt horrible throwing this thing in the trash but I realize I'm not using these anymore and I'm actually going to talk to my dentist next time there about it cuz I understand that the dental industry or dentists even started seeing plastic microbeads in people's gums.

Lisa: Yeah.

Jennifer: And it became, it's like a health issue on top of an ocean issue. But are there specific sources you recommend people to go to to learn about what products are good no microbeads or any general guidelines that people should look for on ingredients?

Lisa: Yes, definitely, well, on back of any product when you see microbeads some actually say that.

Jennifer: I haven't seen that cause I've actually looked.

Lisa: There are some that actually say microbeads. But, also polyethylene or polypropylene those are the two sources of plastics that are now currently being used.

Jennifer: So that would be PPE and PPV polyethylene and polypropylene PPP

Lisa: PE and PP and you know they will spell it out, polyethylene or polypropylene. And I think that there are many good places to go to get educated. I would first definitely recommend our listeners to go to the 5Gyres.org website because we have the whole page about this issue and of course the petition to sign and more information. But also you can go to environmental working group Skin Deep that has a whole section on cosmetics so so you can check out all the ingredients in your cosmetics. But I have found that 5 Gyres partnered with Whole Foods and Whole Foods has remove microbeads from their all their stores so you can feel safe going there. But also it's it's amazing to me how much information there is on the Internet now. I was just looking for natural beauty blog and and I found 50 and probably really researching natural beauty blogs is a way to go and we have we have something we'd love for people to do when they do buy there there non microbead products. For instance, Blush has this great product their giving 50% to 5 Gyres called Life's A Beach and it's. . .

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- Jennifer:* I hate to interrupt but we have about a minute-and-a-half left so I want to hear what you have to say and then we're going to have to wrap it up.
- Lisa:* Okay so if you can use these, get these natural products and then take a picture and put it on Instagram or Twitter with the hashtag bandthbead. We are collecting images of people with their natural alternatives.
- Jennifer:* That's great. That's a neat social media campaign.
- Lisa:* Yay!
- Jennifer:* Very good. Well, we will definitely, I will definitely participate in that, we just a toothpaste change in our family. But, I just want to say first of all thank you for coming on to tell us about what's happening and best place to go is 5Gyres.org for more information and to follow the policy and proposals that are coming through.
- Lisa:* And to sign a petition to get a ban in your state.
- Jennifer:* Fantastic and I also know you have a great blog that has kept up about all the other research efforts and the collaborators that 5 Gyres is bringing in and I wish we could talk more about the recent Expedition. I know that Jack Johnson was there.
- Lisa:* Yay, it was really great.
- Jennifer:* He is such an ocean hero for us and I just want to say thank you for coming on the show.
- Lisa:* Thank you Jennifer, for that was the most fun, fastest 30 minutes that I ever spent.
- Jennifer:* Well, we could probably talk longer. It is a passionate topic of my mine. But thanks again and I am sure we will be in touch.
- Lisa:* Ok. Thanks so much. Bye.
- Jennifer:* We've just been talking with Lisa Boyle from 5 Gyres Institute and discussing the issue with microbeads that are in the environment, in the Great Lakes, in the ocean and the work that 5 Gyres is doing to ban the bead as the safest thing to do to prevent this from getting into the ocean. So, you can check out 5Gyres.org for more information about following the legislation efforts and also best practices and products in the things that you can buy. Very important these little actions add up. We are just about at the end of the time here for the show but I just wanted to leave two announcements with you and that is thinking about petroleum and extraction we have a big celebration here happening on the coast with a ban of oil and gas with the expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries which is now official and we celebrated this past week or two weeks ago June 27th up in the North Coast. The expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones goes all the way up just to North Point Arena and with this expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones is now called Greater Farallones to address the whole Rocky Coast up and down from where it starts in Marin County all the way up to Southern Mendocino County so that is a celebration we're really thrilled about to expand sanctuaries with its number one regulation that really helps protect our

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coasts and that's a ban of oil and gas extraction so something to celebrate there. And also I want to let you know that traveling photo exhibit of Cordell Bank and it's amazing ocean wonders is on exhibit at the Marin Civic Center during business hours Monday through Friday and will have a reception August 25th 4 to 6 p.m. and it's free they'll be some light food and some sanctuary staff will be there to talk about what we're up, talk about the expansion and if you've been wanting to check out the show you can bring some friends and come on over to the Marin Civic Center on August 25th and check out that show. Next month in Point Reyes, the Point Reyes Books is hosting a wonderful author Wallace J. Nichols who is the author of Blue Mind the Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near In Or Under the Water Can Make You Happier Healthier and More Connected and Better At What You Do. In conversation with Jamal Yogi's, a multi disciplinary writer and teacher and this is on August 22nd at the Dance Palace so you can check out Pointreyesbooks.com for their information about that talk on August 22nd and I hope to talk with J prior for Ocean Currents. We'll see we haven't secured that yet. It's PointReyesbooks.com for more information. Thank you so much for tuning in today to a very full show on Ocean Currents and I want to let you know that every single show is saved as podcast in iTunes and you can just search Ocean Currents in iTunes to find out or come to the Cornell Bank website Cordellbank.noaa.gov to get past episodes. Thanks again for tuning in to Ocean Currents.

(Music)